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Diamond Cutter Pleads Guilty in Spy Conspiracy

NEW YORK, Sept. 16 (UPI) — A diamond cutter accused of passing classified information to the Soviet Union pleaded guilty in federal court today to charges he conspired to commit espionage.

Sarkis O. Paskalian, of New York City, entered the plea before U.S. District Court Judge Mark Costantino, who ordered him held on $100,000 bail pending sentencing. He faces a maximum life prison term.

Paskalian, 36, was arrested June 27 along with Sahag K. Dedeyan, 41, a Rockville, Md., mathematician who allegedly supplied documents detailing North Atlantic Treaty Organization military capabilities. The two men are distantly related and both were born in Beirut, Lebanon.

(A spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office in Baltimore said Dedeyan is currently free on bail. The spokesman said Dedeyan's case is pending before a grand jury.)

"I took some information from Mr. Dedeyan and turned it over to Soviet agents," Paskalian said when questioned in court by Costantino. He said the document contained "top secret information relating to military affairs involving the defense of the United States."

Specifically, Paskalian was charged with photographing a 70-page classified document called "Vulnerability Analysis: U.S. Reinforcement of NATO" at Dedeyan's home, 16209 Grist Mill Dr.

Dedeyan, who had top secret clearance to work on defense data at Johns Hopkins University and at Operations Research, Inc., a government contractor in Silver Spring, Md., was charged with failing to report that Paskalian had photographed the document.

Paskalian said the Soviets gave him a camera that he returned with exposed film in it.

Complaints were also filed against two secretaries at the Soviet Mission to the United Nations and a Soviet delegate to a U.N. human rights conference. They were named as co-conspirators but not defendants in the case, the FBI said.

According to the complaint, Paskalian photographed the 70-page document without Dedeyan's knowledge but told him several months later. Dedeyan was paid $1,000, according to the complaint.

Paskalian was allegedly paid $1,5000 by Eduard B. Charchyan, one of the Soviet secretaries. Charchyan had left the country by the time Paskalian and Dedeyan were arrested.